

Region 4 CAC Meeting Minutes December 5, 2007

FWP Staff – Gary Bertellotti, Fred Schultz, Graham Taylor, Bruce Auchly, Brian Golie, Bruce Auchly and Kyqn Kuka

CAC Members – Joe Schaffer, Judie Suden, Mike Labriola, Doug Deffe', Charles Bocock, Rocky Harber, Robert Facklum, Fred Davison and Deanna Robbins

Public/Guests – Shannon Taylor, MSU Professor

Gary opened the meeting and went over the agenda and asked if there were any additions to the agenda.

Member Issues:

Gary went around the table and asked CAC members what issues or discussions they are hearing from their constituents.

Fred Davison – Is a little concerned about the wolf population especially with the news that there may be a pack in the Little Belts. Also concerned about the local deer population around the town of Highwood. A few ranches close to some of the main roads don't allow deer hunting and he is definitely seeing an increase in deer and car accidents. In fact he encountered a deer a few weeks back with his vehicle. Wanted to know how to get road signs up to warn folks. Says he has to swerve out of the way of deer at least twice every time he travels to Belt in the evenings. It was suggested he get the neighbors and town council, if there is one, to address the problem locally. Can contact Highway Department about a sign or have the town do it.

New Business:

Lincoln Property Update: The property, near Shelby, is pristine river bottom area and a valuable asset. The property was willed to the Catholic Diocese of Helena with the department having right of first refusal when it goes for sale. The process is ongoing but we had a short delay as one of his sisters contested the will. That contesting of the will has been dropped. The Catholic Diocese has been receiving a lot comments that the land should be kept in public hands if at all possible. Governor has already talked to the Bishop. Our Director will also meet with the Bishop soon. If this property goes on the market may sell for appraisal value or more. Department will offer appraisal value which

needs to be established. We will have to partner up with other organizations in order to purchase it.

Grizzly Bear Attack – A hunter was attacked by a grizzly while hunting birds near Valier. He is in the hospital and is doing fine. He had extensive injuries due to the mauling. His group was warned that there were grizzlies in the area and they took some precautions but the bear surprised the hunter. We are trying to trap the bear and then move it. This is a wake up call – if you are hunting on the Rocky Mountain Front be bear aware.

Weaver Property – This is a ranch north of Winnett, 18,000 acres, that was part of our Block Management Program. The property was on and off the market for several years. An investment company associated with Cabela's purchased it. It is currently going through a county review process for development purposes in Fergus County. Received a letter from county board looking for comments and we sent a letter opposing development until we know what the actual development is - request for comment wasn't very clear as to what we were to comment on. We have a copy of a letter sent by a gentleman complaining about Cabell's involvement in this purchase. He received a reply back from Cabela's putting the blame on our Block Management Program and some other erroneous information. There will be a public hearing November 1 in Roy and another public hearing in Lewistown at the Snowy Mountain Development Building on November 8. If the CAC has some concerns about this property you as a group can comment to the county. Some of our concerns are public access, easements – prescribed, wildlife issues, game damage, etc.

Fire Season – Beartooth WMA burned 60 – 70 %. Not considered a hot burn. Hunting seasons are going forth on the WMA with no changes. Rehabilitation is ongoing. Lot of elk have been displaced in that area but more so by man's presence rather than the fire. We are having a Devil's Kitchen meeting tomorrow to discuss fire and distribution of elk. Ahorn/Fools Creek fires – we allowed fire lines on some of our properties. Rehab work on the Sun River WMA and Blackleaf WMA has been completed. We also had fires on First People's Buffalo Jump (formerly Ulm Pishkun State Park) and Sluice Boxes State Parks and also 17 acres on the Beckman WMA.

Smith River Citizen's Advisory Committee Planning process is 5 months into the process. It has been a good working group. So far they have covered several topics: picking of campsites when going on the river – how that process has and could work; should pets be allowed on the river; human waste management at the camp sites. We are updating our existing plan that was formulated in 1996. This new plan should last 10-15 years. Another issue to consider is the forest service's food storage order on the Jefferson Forest Division which includes the Smith River corridor. Could be problems and concerns with that. The meetings/process does allow public attendance but not a lot of comment although we do allow for some input. Next meeting is scheduled November 14 at 6:00 pm at the Region 4 Headquarters. Next topic to be covered is carrying capacity issues.

US Forest Service Travel Plan – Right now there is a review of the “Record of Decision”. We have have the plan to review if you are interested. Overall the plan looks good.

Tentative Season Proposals – We will be setting season structure for 2008/2009 seasons. FWP Commission will set Tentatives in December. Month of January we will be taking public comment. For the season setting process there will be 40-50 public meetings throughout the state.

Discussed proposal of wolf season structure. Moving ahead as if wolves will be delisted. There will be a quota season. Discussed possible set up of statewide areas/quotas and possible seasons.

Discussed proposal on Missouri Breaks archery elk that will be put forward. Present set up in most breaks areas is unlimited but that may change to limited.

Other Comets/Questions:

Mike Labriola – What was the census on the Missouri River shocking survey? George – we just finished remark last night so we have not recorded or analyzed the numbers yet but preliminary observations leads us to believe that the populations are similar as in the past few years.

Doug Deffe’ – Wondered about the Blue Tongue toll. Graham – It didn’t appear much in Region 4 at all. Region 5 got hit around the Mussellshell River. They took another survey of antelope in that area and found the populations (antelope) to be down 36%.

Mike Labriola - Is there an ongoing study of commercial use on our resources? Gary – we were involved with several meetings in forming Commercial Use Rules. We haven’t finished that task yet. We need to localize it on our Wildlife Management Areas.

Joe Schaffer – For next meeting we need to be more proactive on land access issues. We could use surplus dollars to get more access? What about land trusts to secure more access? Gary/Graham – We do participate in Conservation Easement purchases. We have nothing internal about land trusts. Several communities have land trusts. We have programs like Habitat Montana and others. Graham will brief the committee next meeting on dollars available.

Do we want to comment to Fergus County on the Weaver property? Think about it and let me know and if so I will work on some comments.

Rocky Harber – Asked about brow-tined versus antlered elk. Graham stated that this is decided in the season structure process.

Got into a discussion about bylaws. Do we need them? Do other regions have them? We need to have some rules about term limits, how to replace folks that quit or don’t attend regular meetings, appointing officers, etc. Gary will check to see if we can get copies of other regions’ bylaws.

Next Meeting – Need to poll CAC members – We are looking at Tuesday, December 4th or Wednesday, December 5th. Fred will poll members via email.